The Medway estuary, towns and downs recreational cycling route

This recreational cycle route is designed to encourage people to experience and enjoy the area's breathtaking views. Using quiet lanes, cycle paths and bridleways, the route offers cyclists great views across the River Medway, its estuary and the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The towns, downs and estuaries recreational cycle tour is easily accessed from Strood, Rochester, Chatham, Gillingham, Rainham and the rural villages.

For the more experienced cyclist, each section of the tour can be cycled in half a day. Less experienced cyclists can use the map overleaf to plan how best to split their route using the three country parks or numerous villages as starting points.

For a detailed map of the route visit www.medway.gov.uk/cycling

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CYCLE TRAIL
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Total length: 36miles (57km)

Route 1: North Medway and rural Gravesend

The main area covered by this route is the Hoo Peninsula, which lies between the Medway and Thames Estuaries. The landscape here is dominated by rich and productive agricultural land, offering extensive views across the estuaries and their habitats.

The fresh water grazing marshes are internationally important for wintering birds. Three reserves sit within this area – Shorne Woods, Ranscombe Farm and Northwood Hill (one of the first nature reserves created by the RSPB).

Leaving the peninsular, the route follows the tow path of the disused Thames and Medway canal as it heads towards Gravesend. This route is also a National Cycle Network Path 1, and forms part of the Saxon Shore Way walking route. The route passes the historic villages of Higham and Cobham, which share connections to Charles Dickens and offer opportunities to refuel and relax.

01 Rochester Bridge to Hoo Village
This largely urban section of the route takes you along Canal Road, past the entrance to the now closed Thames and Medway Canal, through the Medway City Estate and to Berwick Way where you will head off towards the Upnors. Turn left to go along Upchat Road to Chattenden and into Hoo.

02 Hoo Village to Stoke
Taking the Stoke Road from the village centre, the route now takes you out on quiet roads towards Kingsnorth. Views open up to the east across the marshes and the Medway estuary as the route heads over the mineral train line towards North Street. Next the route encounters Upper, Middle and then Lower Stoke. Take note the route follows the A228 for a short section between Middle and Lower Stoke.

03 Lower Stoke to High Halstow
Leaving Lower Stoke following Cuckolds Green Road, the route cuts back towards High Halstow. Turning right at Hoppers Lane the cycle route meets the Ratcliffe Highway where it quickly turns right along Newlands Farm lane. The route cuts left following a bridleway to join Clinch Street, then Britannia Road and then into High Halstow village.

04 High Halstow to Cliffe
Leaving High Halstow the route drops down Cooling Road and Lipwell Hill taking in fabulous views of the Thames estuary, orchards and woodlands. Passing the RSPB's Northward Hill Reserve, the route enters Cooling along Main Road taking you past yet another pub, then St James church (famous links to Dickens) and along Cooling Road to Cliffe.

05 Cliffe to Higham
From Cliffe the route goes across to the Higham Road on to the Buckland Road. Here views of the old chalk pits can be seen which are now used for fisheries, boating and diving. The route moves southwards until it meets Gore Green where it turns right and heads into Higham with its train station and parking.

06 Higham to Shorne
Heading out of Higham along Canal Road, the route passes the open section of the Thames and Medway Canal. Now a haven for wildlife, the canal path guides you down to a railway crossing leading to Queens Farm Road. The route now heads south along Lower Road and then Green Farm Lane, across the busy Gravesend Road and Forge Lane into Shorne. Here pubs, parking and shops provide welcome relief.

DID YOU KNOW?
A 20-minute bike ride could use the same amount of calories as a cappuccino, a bar of chocolate or a 175ml glass of wine.

07 Shorne Village to Cobham
The route now heads towards Cobham along Tanyard Hill, Woodlands Lane and on to Brewars Road. Passing Shorne Woods Country Park with its offer of parking and facilities, the route passes over the A2 and passes Cobham Hall and its parkland grounds. The Half Pence Lane takes you into the village of Cobham with its small shop and three pubs. There is parking at the village hall.

08 Cobham to Cuxton and Rochester Bridge (Alternative route back 1)
Dropping down the Cobhambury Road, the route gives great views of the Kent Downs. Turning left on to Warren Road you pass through Lower Bush and into Cuxton with its village shops and train station. The route climbs Sunbridge Hill (using Pilgrims Way) and goes over the M2. Here the route continues into Medway Gate and re-emerges on Cuxton Road and down to Darnley Road. Heading for the High Street (A2) the route takes you back to Rochester Bridge.

09 M2 crossing to Rochester (Alternative route back 2)
After leaving Cuxton an alternative route follows the North Downs Way bridleway and crosses the M2 bridge to join with the Wouldham Road in Rochester.

Active Medway Cycling Groups

Rediscover the joy of cycling.

- Adult rides led by trained cycle leaders.
- Build bike confidence on quieter routes.
- Rides between 45 and 90 minutes.

For more information phone **01634 333720** or email **cycling@medway.gov.uk**

www.abettermedway.co.uk

10 Cobham to Great Buckland Farm
Leaving Cobham the route leaves Half Pence Lane and turns right on to Bats Road, runs between farmland and crosses the bridge of the train line. Bats road continues until it joins Henley Street where it drops down to the Golden Lion public house. The route follows Lockyers Hill / Buckland Road passes through woodland between Great Buckland Farm and Luxon Farm.

DID YOU KNOW?
Research shows adults who cycle regularly have fitness levels of someone up to 10 years younger.

11 Great Buckland Farm to Birling Hill
You are now on the Leywood Road, which will take you on through more woodlands until you meet the White Horse Road. Cycling between woodlands the route passes Budgells Wood Camping and leads on to Birling Hill.

12 Birling Hill to Snodland
Views of the Medway Valley open up as the route turns left and heads along Paddlesworth Road, passes the attractive artificial lakes and drops into Snodland along Constitution Hill. Once in the village centre follow the Holborough Road to the A228. There is no quiet route along the A228 connecting the route to Peters Bridge so plan this section with that in mind.

13 Snodland to Rochester
Cross Peters Bridge enjoying views of the River Medway and follow section six back into Rochester via the Esplanade.

5 tips for a safer ride

01 Avoid riding up the inside of large vehicles, like lorries or buses, where you might not be seen.
02 Always use lights after dark or when visibility is poor.
03 Wear light coloured or reflective clothing during the day and reflective clothing and/or accessories in the dark.
04 Follow the Highway Code including observing 'stop' and 'give way' signs and traffic lights.
05 Wear a correctly fitted cycle helmet, which is securely fastened and conforms to current regulation.

Total length: 28miles (45km)

Route 2: Medway's towns and downs

This route provides an opportunity to experience the diversity of Medway - its urban heartlands, countryside, farmland, orchards and woods.

Passing through historic Rochester, this tour moves on to Chatham, home of the Historic Dockyard where HMS Victory was built in the 1700's. The route maximises urban cycle routes allowing you to travel from Chatham to Gillingham and The Strand with its stunning views across the River Medway. The ride then opens out towards the North Downs offering vistas of the rolling Kent countryside.

An off-road section along the Pilgrims Way picks up the village of Burham where the Battle of the Medway took place.

01 Rochester to Riverside Country Park
The route starts at the heart of urban Medway following Rochester High Street towards Chatham via Medway Street. Passing the bus station and following Dock Road, cycle to Maritime Way, the route passing St Mary's Island with its pubs, parking and shops. Using the Pier Road cycle way, the route enters The Strand at Gillingham where it follows the off-road route on to Gillingham Riverside Country Park. Toilets, parks and café are available at both of the last two venues.

02 Riverside Country Park to Hartlip
Leaving the country park, the route continues on the NCR1 pass Otter Quay and goes down Canterbury Lane between Upchurch golf course, turning left on to Oak Lane and then right along the off-road bridleway which joins with Hollywell Lane and then Breach Lane. Crossing the A2 the route heads south along Lower Hartlip Road and into Hartlip.

03 Hartlip to Detling
Leaving Hartlip and its pub, the route passes under the M2 and follows Mount Lane on to Warren Lane. The route passes the Queenborough Down Warren nature reserve and joins Yelstead lane where a right turn takes you up a long steep hill to Cox Street and finally Scragged Oak Road. Hilly but with great views, the route passes the rear of the Kent Show Ground and at Broader Lane turns away from the village of Detling on to the off-road Pilgrims Way.

04 Detling to Burham
From the end of Broader Lane the route runs off-road along the Pilgrims Way to where it crosses over the Channel Tunnel Rail Link route and then under Blue Bell Hill (A229). Then, following the Old Chatham Hill, the route passes along Rochester Road following signs to the village of Burham. View across the River Medway to Snodland and Halling and the new river crossing at Wouldham.

05 Burham to Wouldham
The route leaves Burham following Church Street to where it joins with Court Road with its new cycle path via Hall Road towards the new Peter's Bridge. Hall Road continues through the new housing estates on to the village of Wouldham. The villages offers a pub and parking and some great views.

06 Wouldham to Rochester
Following the High Street the route leaves the village and follows the Woulham Road to pass under both the M2 and the High Speed train line. Borstal Street takes you up to Shorts Way which has a refreshing downhill section to join the Esplanade and finally the A2 at Rochester bridge.

Route map

For a detailed map of the route visit www.medway.gov.uk/cycling

Tourist information
www.visitmedway.org
Email: visitor.centre@medway.gov.uk
Phone: 01634 338141

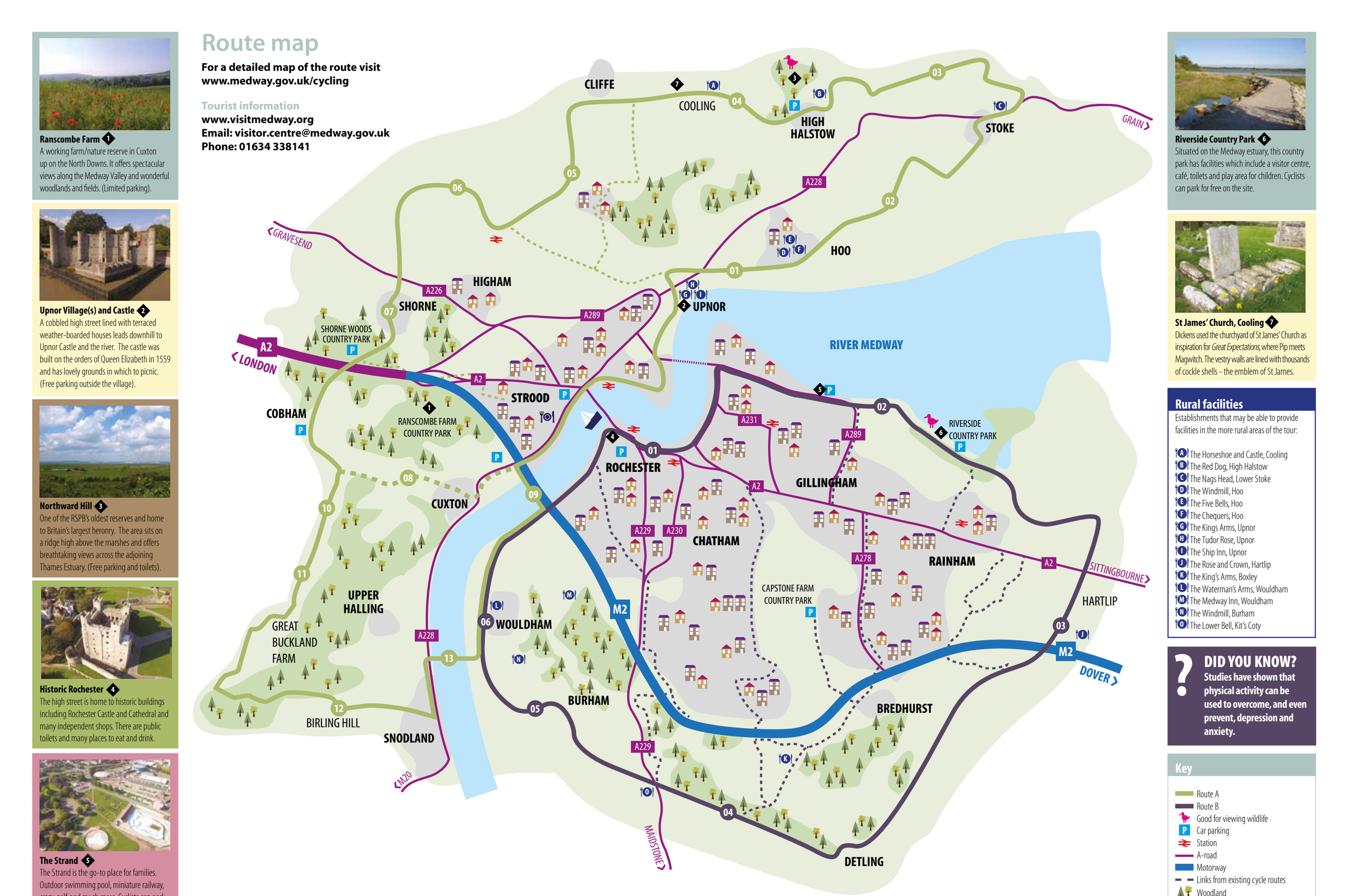
Ranscombe Farm 1
A working farm/nature reserve in Cuxton up on the North Downs. It offers spectacular views along the Medway Valley and wonderful woodlands and fields. (Limited parking).

Upnor Village(s) and Castle 2
A cobbled high street lined with terraced weather-boarded houses leads downhill to Upnor Castle and the river. The castle was built on the orders of Queen Elizabeth in 1559 and has lovely grounds in which to picnic. (Free parking outside the village).

Northward Hill 3
One of the RSPB's oldest reserves and home to Britain's largest heronry. The area sits on a ridge high above the marshes and offers breathtaking views across the adjoining Thames Estuary. (Free parking and toilets).

Historic Rochester 4
The high street is home to historic buildings including Rochester Castle and Cathedral and many independent shops. There are public toilets and many places to eat and drink.

The Strand 5
The Strand is the go-to place for families. Outdoor swimming pool, miniature railway, crazy golf, and much more. Cyclists can park here for free and there are toilets and a cafe.



Riverside Country Park 6
Situated on the Medway estuary, this country park has facilities which include a visitor centre, café, toilets and play area for children. Cyclists can park for free on the site.

St James' Church, Cooling 7
Dickens used the churchyard of St James' Church as inspiration for *Great Expectations*, where Pip meets Magwitch. The vestry walls are lined with thousands of cockle shells - the emblem of St James.

Rural facilities

Establishments that may be able to provide facilities in the more rural areas of the tour:

- (A) The Horseshoe and Castle, Cooling
- (B) The Red Dog, High Halstow
- (C) The Nags Head, Lower Stoke
- (D) The Windmill, Hoo
- (E) The Five Bells, Hoo
- (F) The Chequers, Hoo
- (G) The Kings Arms, Upnor
- (H) The Tudor Rose, Upnor
- (I) The Ship Inn, Upnor
- (J) The Rose and Crown, Hartlip
- (K) The King's Arms, Boxley
- (L) The Waterman's Arms, Wouldham
- (M) The Medway Inn, Wouldham
- (N) The Windmill, Burham
- (O) The Lower Bell, Kit's Coty

DID YOU KNOW?

Studies have shown that physical activity can be used to overcome, and even prevent, depression and anxiety.

Key

- Route A
- Route B
- Good for viewing wildlife
- Car parking
- Station
- A-road
- Motorway
- Links from existing cycle routes
- Woodland
- Urban area